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EFFRAN  
ESCA



STEPHEN  
PAILLIPS







PAOLO AND FRANCESCA

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and accepted for production at the St. James's  
Theatre; meanwhile it is published by  
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# PAOLO & FRANCESCA

A TRAGEDY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

*O lasso  
Quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio  
Mend costoro al doloroso passo*

DANTE

JOHN LANE  
THE BODLEY HEAD  
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EIGHTEENTH THOUSAND.

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TO  
GEORGE ALEXANDER  
THIS PLAY IS DEDICATED  
BY THE AUTHOR



## CHARACTERS

GIOVANNI MALATESTA ("LO SCANCIATO")	.				<i>Tyrant of Rimini</i>
PAOLO ("IL BELLO")	.				<i>Brother to Giovanni, and Captain of Mercenaries in the service of Florence</i>
VALENTINO	.	.	.	.	
CORRADO	.	.	.	.	
LUIGI	.	.	.	.	
MARCO	.	.	.	.	<i>A Soldier</i>
PULCI	.	.	.	.	<i>A Drug-seller</i>
CARLO	.	.	.	.	<i>Servant to Giovanni</i>
FRANCESCA DA RIMINI	.				<i>Bride of Giovanni, and Daughter of Guido da Polenta, Tyrant of Ravenna</i>
LUCREZIA DEGL' ONESTI	.				<i>Cousin to Giovanni</i>
COSTANZA	.	.	.	.	<i>Kinswoman to Francesca</i>
TESSA	.	.	.	.	<i>Daughter to Pulci</i>
NITA	.	.	.	.	<i>Maid to Francesca</i>
ANGELA	.	.	.	.	<i>A Blind and Aged Servant of the Malatesta</i>
MIRRA	.	.	.	.	<i>A Peasant Girl</i>

*Guests, Couriers, Soldiers, Customers of Pulci,  
Servants, &c.*



## **ACT I**



## PAOLO AND FRANCESCA

SCENE.—*A gloomy Hall in the Malatesta Castle at Rimini, hung with weapons and instruments of the Chase; Guests and Citizens assembled, with Soldiers, Huntsmen and Retainers; hounds held in leash.* As the scene opens a trumpet is blown outside. Enter GIOVANNI hurriedly down a gallery to the Hall with papers in his hands. He pauses on the steps.

Gio. Peace to this house of Rimini henceforth !  
Kinsmen, although the Ghibelline is fallen,  
And lies out on the plains of Trentola,  
Still have we foes untrampled, wavering friends.  
Therefore, on victory to set a seal,

To-day I take to wife Ravenna's child,  
Daughter of great Polenta, our ally ;  
Between us an indissoluble bond.  
Deep in affairs my brother I despatched,  
My Paolo—who is indeed myself—  
For scarcely have we breathed a separate  
thought—  
To bring her on the road to Rimini.

[*A noise of falling chains is heard.*  
I hear them at the gates ; the chains have fallen.

*The doors at end of gallery are thrown open. Enter out of sunlight PAOLO, leading FRANCESCA by the hand, followed by LADIES and SQUIRES. Flowers are thrown over them. FRANCESCA bends low to GIOVANNI, who raises her up.*

Rise up, Francesca, and unveil your face.

[*He kisses her on the forehead.*  
Kinsmen, and you that follow with my bride,  
You see me beat with many blows, death-pale

With gushing of much blood, and deaf with war—  
You see me, and I languish for a calm.  
I ask no great thing of the skies ; I ask  
Henceforth a quiet breathing, that this child,  
Hither all dewy from her convent fetched,  
Shall lead me gently down the slant of life.  
Here then I sheathe my sword ; and fierce must be  
That quarrel where again I use the steel.

[*A murmur of approbation.* He turns  
to FRANCESCA.

Tell me, Francesca ; can you be content  
To live the quiet life which I propose ?  
Where, though you miss the violent joys of youth,  
Yet will I cherish you more carefully  
Than might a younger lover of your years.

FRANC. My lord, my father gave me to you : I  
Am innocent as yet of this great life ;  
My only care to attend the holy bell,  
To sing and to embroider curiously :  
And as through glass I view the windy world.

Sweet is the stillness you ensure to me  
Whose days have been so still : and yet I fear  
To be found wanting in so great a house :  
I lack experience in such governing.  
So if at any time I seem to offend you,  
Will you impute it to my youth ? But I  
Shall never fail in duty willingly.

GIO. I like that coldness in you, my Francesca,  
And to my cousin I will make you known.  
Widowed and childless, she has ruled till now  
This fort of soldiers, a rough hostelry,  
Which henceforth is your home ; since I remember  
She was my friend : has often cooled a rashness,  
Which I inherit : lean at first on her.

LUC. Francesca, as your husband says, we two  
Have long been friends ; but friendship faints in

love,

And since through inexperience you may err,  
My place is near you ; to advise and guide  
Suits with my years.

COSTANZA.

O Lord of Rimini !

With sighs we leave her as we leave a child.  
Be tender with her, even as God hath been !  
She hath but wondered up at the white clouds ;  
Hath just spread out her hands to the warm  
sun ;

Hath heard but gentle words and cloister sounds.

[GIOVANNI bows to her.

GIO. Friends, you will go with us to church ;  
till then

Walk where you please—yet one word more—be  
sure

That, though I sheathe the sword, I am not tamed.  
What I have snared, in that I set my teeth  
And lose with agony ; when hath the prey  
Writhed from our mastiff-fangs ?

LUC. Giovanni, loose

Francesca's hands—the tears are in her eyes.

GIO. Well, well, till church-time then. Paolo,  
stay !

[*Exeunt LUCREZIA, GUESTS and RETAINERS; NITA and ATTENDANT LADIES remaining in the background.* GIOVANNI, PAOLO, and FRANCESCA come down.]

These delegates from Pesaro, Francesca,  
Expect my swift decision on the tax.  
Then will you think me negligent or cold  
If to my brother I confide you still,  
A moment—and no more ? [Exit GIOVANNI.]

FRANC. O, Paolo,

Who were they that have lived within these walls ?

PAO. Why do you ask ?

FRANC. It is not sign nor sound ;  
Only it seemeth difficult to breathe ;  
It is as though I battled with this air.

PAO. You are not sad ?

FRANC. What is it to be sad ?  
Nothing hath grieved me yet but ancient woes,  
Sea-perils, or some long-ago farewell,

Or the last sunset cry of wounded kings.  
I have wept but on the pages of a book,  
And I have longed for sorrow of my own.

PAO. Come nothing nearer than such far-off  
tears

Or peril from the pages of a book ;  
And, therefore, sister, am I glad that you  
Are wedded unto one so full of shelter.  
Constant is he, and steel-true till the grave.  
For me—to-night I must be gone.

FRANC. To-night !

Ah, Paolo, go not away so soon !  
You brought me hither—leave me not at once,  
Not now—

PAO. Francesca !

FRANC. I am still a child.

I feel that to my husband I could go  
Kiss him good-night, or sing him to his sleep,  
And there an end.

PAO. Sister, I would that I——

FRANC. Can we not play together a brief while ?

Stay, then, a little ! Soon I shall be used  
To my grave place and duty—but not yet.  
Stay, then, a little !

PAO.                   Here my brother comes.

*Enter GIOVANNI.*

GIO. Stand either side of me—you whom I  
love.

I'd have you two as dear now to each other  
As both of you to me. We are, Francesca,  
A something more than brothers—fiercest friends ;  
Concordia was our mother named, and ours  
Is but one heart, one honour, and one death.  
Any that came between us I would kill.

FRANC. Sir, I will love him : is he not my  
brother ?

[NITA advances, with ATTENDANT LADIES.

NITA. My lady, it draws late.

Gio. Go with her, child.

[*Exeunt* FRANCESCA, NITA and LADIES.]

Gio. [To PAOLO.] You have set a new seal on  
an ancient love,

Bringing this bride.

PAO. And having brought her, here  
My office ends. I'll say farewell to-night.

Gio. This very night !

PAO. I'll go with you to church ;  
But from the after-feast I ask excuse.

Gio. I do not understand.

PAO. Brother, believe  
I do not hasten thus without deep cause.

Gio. Is there such haste indeed ?

PAO. Such haste indeed !

Gio. [Taking his hand.] Come, Paolo, we two  
have never held

A mystery between us—tell me out !

Harsh am I, but to you was ever gentle.

What is the special reason of your going ?

Pao. The troop for Florence which I mustered  
here

Should spur at daybreak.

Gio. There is no such haste.  
What are you holding from me ?

Pao. Ah, enough !

Gio. What sudden face hath made this hall so  
dark ?

Come, then, 'tis natural—walk to and fro  
And tell me—ah ! some lady you beheld  
There at Ravenna in Francesca's train !

Was it not so ?

Pao. Urge me no more to words.

Gio. What woman draws you thus away from  
me ?

Pao. No woman, brother, draws me from this  
house.

Gio. You like not then my marriage !—but  
indeed,

No marriage can dissolve the bond between us.

Here you are free as ever in the house—

Once more, what is the reason of your going ?

Pao. Brother, 'tis nothing that hath chanced  
but rather

That which may chance if here I am detained.

Gio. Darker and yet more dark. Now speak  
it out.

Pao. I cannot.

Gio. Paolo, this is an ill  
Beginning of my marriage, and I loathe  
That you should put me off. We three, I  
thought—

We three together—tempt me not to rage !

And as your elder I command your stay,  
Your presence both at church and at the feast.  
You would affront Francesca publicly ?

Pao. Giovanni, 'tis enough, I stay. Forgive me.

Gio. Brother, this is our first and last dispute.  
Now leave me to these papers. [PAOLO *is going.*]

Paolo,

You go with me heart-whole into this marriage ?  
Give me your hand again !

Pao. There is my hand.

[Exit PAOLO. GIOVANNI unfolds papers and  
reads.

Gio. "In Pesaro sedition ! Andrea Sarti  
Is urgent"—

*Enter LUCREZIA. She touches him on the arm.*

Luc. Pardon me—you sit alone.  
While there is time, I have stolen in on you  
To speak my dearest wishes for this marriage,  
And in a manner, too, old friend, farewell.

Gio. Farewell ?

Luc. And in a manner 'tis farewell.

Gio. This marriage is political.

Luc. No more ?

Gio. And yet since I have seen Francesca, I  
Have fallen into a trance. It seems, indeed,  
That I am bringing into this dark air

A pureness that shall purge these ancient halls.

Luc. Watch, then, this pureness : fend it fearfully.

Gio. I took her dreaming from her convent trees.

Luc. And for that reason tremble at her more  
Old friend, remember that we two are passed  
Into the grey of life : but O, beware  
This child scarce yet awake upon the world  
Dread her first ecstasy, if one should come  
That should appear to her half-opened eyes  
Wonderful as a prince from fairyland  
Or venturing through forests toward her face—  
No—do not stride about the room—your limp  
Is evident the more—come, sit by me  
As you were wont to sit. Youth goes toward  
youth.

Gio. What peril can be here ? In Rimini ?

Luc. I have but said and say, " Youth goes  
toward youth,"

And she shall never prize, as I do still,  
Your savage courage and deliberate force,  
Even your mounded back and sullen gait.

Gio. Lucrezia ! this is that old bitterness.

Luc. Bitterness—am I bitter ? Strange, O  
strange !

How else ? My husband dead and childless  
left,

My thwarted woman - thoughts have inward  
turned,

And that vain milk like acid in me eats.

Have I not in my thought trained little feet  
To venture, and taught little lips to move  
Until they shaped the wonder of a word ?

I am long practised. O those children, mine !

Mine, doubly mine : and yet I cannot touch them,  
I cannot see them, hear them—Does great God  
Expect I shall clasp air and kiss the wind  
For ever ? And the budding cometh on,  
The burgeoning, the cruel flowering :

At night the quickening splash of rain, at dawn  
That muffled call of babes how like to birds ;  
And I amid these sights and sounds must  
starve—

I, with so much to give, perish of thrift !  
Omitted by His casual dew !

GIO. Well, well,  
You are spared much : children can wring the  
heart.

Luc. Spared ! to be spared what I was born to  
have !

I am a woman, and this very flesh  
Demands its natural pangs, its rightful throes,  
And I implore with vehemence these pains.  
I know that children wound us, and surprise  
Even to utter death, till we at last  
Turn from a face to flowers : but this my heart  
Was ready for these pangs, and had foreseen.  
O ! but I grudge the mother her last look  
Upon the coffined form—that pang is rich—

Envy the shivering cry when gravel falls.  
And all these maiméd wants and thwarted  
thoughts,  
Eternal yearning, answered by the wind,  
Have dried in me belief and love and fear.  
I am become a danger and a menace,  
A wandering fire, a disappointed force,  
A peril—do you hear, Giovanni?—O!  
It is such souls as mine that go to swell  
The childless cavern cry of the barren sea,  
Or make that human ending to night-wind.  
Why have I bared myself to you?—I know not,  
Unless, indeed, this marriage—yes, this mar-  
riage—

Near now, is't not?—So near made me cry out.  
Ah! she will bring a sound of pattering feet!  
But now this message—and those papers. I  
Must haste to see the banquet-table spread—  
Your bride is yet so young. [Exit LUCREZIA.

Gio. [Reads.]

“ Antonio

And Conti urge it is impolitic  
To lay another load"— Youth goes toward  
youth!—  
"On murmuring Pesaro"—in Rimini!—  
"Foresee revolt." Here in the house all's safe.

*Enter SERVANT, leading in blind ANGELA.*

SER. My Lord, blind Angela entreats that she  
Once more may touch you ere you go to church.

GIO. Give me your hand, old nurse. [He  
kneels.] Will you not bless me?

You will not? And your tears fall down on me?

ANG. My son, for are you not my very son?  
I gave you milk: from me you sucked in life,  
And still my breast is thrilling from your lips.

GIO. Well, well, then!

ANG. So that now my very flesh  
Must quail at the approach of woe to you.

GIO. The drops stand on your forehead!  
What is this?

ANG. I never trembled for you till this hour.

GIO. What is it that you fear ?

[*He kisses her hand.*

ANG.

Now your lips touch

And I begin to feel more surely, child.

Ah ! but a juice too pure hath now been poured  
In a dark ancient wine : and the cup seethes.

GIO. Speak clearer to me.

ANG.

Closer lay your head.

Ne'er in the battle have I feared for you.

What is the strange, soft thing which you have  
brought

Into our life ?

GIO. Francesca, do you mean ?

Why do you clutch my arm ? What is't you see ?

ANG. A kind of twilight struggles through my  
dark.

Be near me ! Soon it seems that I shall know.

GIO. Upon what scene are those blind eyes so  
fixed ?

ANG. A place of leaves : and ah ! how still it is !  
She sits alone amid great roses.

GIO. She ?

ANG. Who is he that steals in upon your bride ?

GIO. Angela !

ANG. And no sound in all the world !

GIO. What doth he there ?

ANG. He reads out of a book.

There comes a murmuring as of far-off things.

Nearer he drew and kissed her on the lips.

GIO. His face, mother, his face ?

ANG. 'Tis dark again.

GIO. His face ? that I may know him when we  
meet.

ANG. His face was dim : a twilight struggles  
back.

I see two lying dead upon a bier—

Slain suddenly, and in each other's arms.

GIO. Are they those two that in the roses kissed ?

ANG. Those two !

GIO. Then quickly tell me of him !

ANG. Ah !

Again 'tis dark. The twilight, as it seemed,  
With difficulty came, and might not stay.  
My son, art thou still here ?

GIO. Why do your lips  
Move fast and yet no words find out their way ?  
What are they vainly shaping ?

ANG. Who hath now  
Ta'en hold on me ?

GIO. Speak, speak, then !

ANG. He shall be  
Not far to seek : yet perilous to find.  
Unwillingly he comes a wooing : she  
Unwillingly is wooed : yet shall they woo.  
His kiss was on her lips ere she was born.

GIO. Who used thy mouth then, and so  
strangely spoke ?

O, this is folly ! Yet it weighs me down

[Trumpets are heard.]

ANG. What is that sound ?

GIO. My marriage trumpets !

ANG. Here

Still let me sit, and hear the folk pass by.

*Enter from one side KINSMEN and RETAINERS, PAOLO at their head. GIOVANNI joins him, putting his arm round his neck.*

GIO. Paolo, shall we walk together still ?

[*Exit marriage procession of KINSMEN, &c., led by GIOVANNI and PAOLO.*  
*Meanwhile enter from the other side FRANCESCA, LUCREZIA, and attendant LADIES.* FRANCESCA, *in passing, pauses and offers trinket to ANGELA, who shudders, letting it fall.* *Exeunt all but ANGELA, who remains staring before her.*

CURTAIN.



## **ACT II**

c



*SCENE.—A Hall in the Palace.*

*A week elapses between Acts I. and II.*

GIOVANNI seated with papers; PAOLO, in  
armour, pacing up and down.

Gio. You chafe to go?

Pao. I languish for the road,  
The open road, and chime of mailed feet.

Gio. And still I marvel at such anxious haste.

Pao. My troop is mustered now: six miles  
from hence

I take command for Florence.

Gio. Well, I'll urge  
Your stay no more; yet I suspect no less.

Pao. What?

Gio. That no soldier-business lures  
you hence.

PAO. Brother, again !

GIO. I'll laugh at you no more.

[*He rises and speaks slowly.*

I have a deeper cause to wish your stay  
Than when I urged it last.

PAO. A deeper cause ?

GIO. I have been warned of peril to Francesca.

PAO. Peril !

GIO. Blind Angela in vision saw  
One stealing in upon my wife to woo her.  
Ah ! you, too, start ! I am not then the fool  
I call myself to be so burdened down—  
You too it touches.

PAO. 'Twas a moment's fear.

GIO. [*Taking his hand.*] Such sympathy is ours,

so close are we,

That what I suffer you straightway must feel.

PAO. What manner, then, of man was he that  
wooed ?

GIO. Ah, there ! his face was dim. O, Paolo !

If but a moment I could see it clear,  
Look in his eyes as into yours, and know.  
Well, this is folly!—can be reasoned off—  
And yet it troubles me. Now since I must  
Surely be absent on affairs, I could  
More easily Francesca leave behind  
If you were by her side.

PAO.                            If I ?

GIO.                            And whom  
Than my own brother could I better leave ?

PAO. Ah, brother, such a charge I cannot  
well

Support. If this thing happened by some chance,  
I in the house, you absent—'tis a duty  
I would not willingly take up.

GIO.                            See how  
You cool to me.

PAO.                            Set me to any service;  
Despatch me into peril—ask my life.  
I'll give away my being and breath for you.

Giovanni, you doubt not, you cannot doubt,  
My love ?

GIO. I must not, else I should go mad,  
So dear you are to me.

PAO. And he, this wooer,  
If he should wrong Francesca any way  
My dagger to his heart were swift as yours.

GIO. I know that well.

*Enter FRANCESCA.*

Francesca, whence come you ?  
FRANC. From fostering garden flowers.

GIO. Paolo  
Is set on going. I have urged, implored—  
He has no answer, only he will go.

*Enter a SERVANT hurriedly.*

SER. A courier, sir, spurred out of Pesaro !

GIO. So I expected ! I will come to him.

[*Exit GIOVANNI hurriedly and SERVANT.*

FRANC. [To PAOLO.] Will you not stay? My husband wishes it—

My husband and your brother—so he speaks Twice with each word.

PAO. My brother and myself Have spoken of this, and yet you see I go.

FRANC. If for his sake you will not stay, perhaps

Even for mine you will a little linger.  
All here are kind to me, all grave and kind,  
But O, I have a fluttering up toward joy,  
Lightness and laughter, and a need of singing.

You are more near my age—you understand.

Where are you vulnerable, Paolo?

You are so cased in steel—is't here? or here?  
Lay that sad armour by—that steel cuirass.  
See, then! I will unloose it with my hands.  
I cannot loose it—there's some trick escapes me.

PAO. Francesca, think not I can lightly leave  
you

And go out from your face into the dark.  
Ah! can you think it is not sweet to breathe  
That delicate air and flowery sigh of you,  
The stealing May and mystery of your spirit ?  
Am I not flesh and blood ?—am I not young ?  
Is it easy, then, for youth to run from youth ?—  
And yet from you I run. Or are we swift  
To fly delight ?—And yet from you I fly.  
What shall I say ?

FRANC. Sweet are your words, but dark.  
Is beauty to be dreaded, then, and shunned ?

PAO. How shall I tell you and sow in you  
thoughts

Which are not there as yet ?

[*He moves to go.*

FRANC. And you will go ?  
Will you not say farewell ? Will you not kiss  
My hand at least ? Why do you tremble, then ?  
Is even the touch of me so full of peril ?

PAO. O ! of immortal peril !

FRANC. But how strange !  
You dread this little hand ? O, wonderful !  
Your face is white, and yet you have killed men !

PAO. Francesca !

FRANC. Do you fear to look in my eyes,  
You so ensteeled and clanging in your stride ?  
And you could crush my life out with your hand.  
O, this new peril that I have about me !

PAO. Child !

FRANC. And this woe that comes from me  
to men !  
And I can stay your going, can I not ?  
Look up ! and with a smile I'll bind you fast.

PAO. Sister, I suffer ! now at last farewell !

[*Exit PAOLO, tearing himself away.*

FRANC. [*Running to a mirror.*] Where is the  
glass ? O, face unknown and strange !  
Slight face, and yet the cause of woe to men !

*Enter NITA.*

Nita, did any pass you on the stair ?

NITA. Lord Paolo came by me, all in stcel.

FRANC. Nita, he trembled to look up at me !  
And when I nearer came all pale he grew.

And when I smiled he suffered, as it seemed ;  
And then I smiled again : for it was strange.  
Is't wicked such sweet cruelty to use ?

O ! and that bluer blue—that greener green !

NITA. My Lady, there's no help. And for my  
sake

Tall men have fought and lost bright blood for me.

[*She looks in the glass.*

We cannot choose ; our faces madden men !

FRANC. And yet, Nita, and yet—can any tell  
How sorrow first doth come ? Is there a step,  
A light step, or a dreamy drip of oars ?  
Is there a stirring of leaves, or ruffle of wings ?  
For it seems to me that softly, without hand,  
Surely she touches me.

NITA. O, such as you  
Are from their birth uplifted above sorrow.

FRANC. But am I? am I? Has he left the house?

How far, then, hath he gone by now—how far?  
Surely 'tis natural to desire him back—  
Most natural—is it not most natural?—Say!  
And yet—my heart is wild—

NITA. He is, my Lady,

Your husband's brother.

FRANC. O, I had not thought!  
I had not thought! I have sinned, and I am stained!

[*She weeps.*

NITA. Lady, you have done nothing.

*Enter GIOVANNI, with ATTENDANTS; LUCREZIA, with LADIES, to whom she gives directions apart.*

GIOVANNI comes down to FRANCESCA.

GIO. Could you not  
Prevail on him to stay?—he will return.  
How beautiful you seem, Francesca, now,  
As though new-risen with the bloom of dreams!

More difficult it grows to leave your side.  
I, like a miser, run my fingers through  
Your hair : yet tears are lately in your eyes !  
What little grief perplexes you, my child ?

FRANC. I cannot tell, but suffer me to seek  
The Lady Mother of the convent.

Gio. Yet  
You shall not stir alone. I have a fear.

[To ATTENDANTS.

Follow your mistress, and escort her back.

[Exit FRANCESCA, NITA and escort. LU-  
CREZIA dismisses LADIES and comes  
down to GIOVANNI.

GIO. [Looking after FRANCESCA.] The peril,  
ah ! the peril !

LUC. What is this ?

GIO. Sit, then, and listen. You first sowed  
in me

The apprehension of Francesca's youth.

LUC. O, I but said —

Gio. Listen ! That very hour  
Blind Angela, that held me at her breast,  
Whose very flesh anticipates my fate,  
I found all shivering like a creature dumb.  
She clutched my arm, and then, as from the touch,  
There came a kind of twilight in her dark,  
And in that twilight with blind eyes she saw  
One stealing in upon my wife to woo her.

Luc. Ah !

Gio. In a place of leaves they sat and read.  
Nearer he drew, and kissed her on the lips.  
Again into her dark the twilight came,  
And they two lay together on a bier,  
Slain ere they knew, and in each other's arms.  
These images have so enthralled my brain  
I have lived since then in fever.

Luc. But this shadow  
That wooed Francesca, and then died with her,  
Was nothing more discerned ?

Gio. The face was dim.

Luc. But could she give no hint of form or voice ?

Gio. I cried—"How shall I know him?"—  
Then her lips,

After a frantic striving, shaped these words—  
"Unwillingly he comes a wooing ; she  
Unwillingly is wooed : yet shall they woo."

Luc. Unwillingly ! This, as it seems, would point—

Gio. [Starting to his feet.] Ah ! does the scent come to you ? Set me on !

Luc. [Slowly.] To one who had dear reason not to woo—

To one who owed you much—some ancient friend !

Gio. Fainter again ! I know of no such man.  
Hark back.

Luc. Said she no more, then ?

Gio. "He shall be  
Not far to seek, yet perilous to find!"

[LUCREZIA starts.

What, does the scent come stronger now? You  
start,

And your eyes glitter——

Luc. [Going slowly to him and laying her hand  
on his shoulder.] Let us hunt this trail!

And yet you will mislike whither it leads.

Gio. Nothing can hold me now.

Luc. "Not far to seek"

Points back to Rimini, this little town,  
To one, perhaps, mad for Francesca's face,  
That lurks about us.

Gio. Wary now, yet swift!

Luc. Here at our gates, or nearer still.

Gio. Say, say!

Luc. Perhaps, perhaps, within this very house.

Gio. O barren restless woman, at what sight  
Do you give cry at last?

Luc. [Looking into his eyes.] Are you still  
eager?

Gio. I shut my eyes and I run into it.

Luc. [Starting back.] That crouch as of a beast  
about to spring !

I dare not, will not, speak till you are calm.

Gio. I am calm [*bending his sword across his knee*]. This steel is true that I can bend it  
Into a hoop !

Luc. O, then, if it should be  
One that had risen, eaten and drunk with you,  
Whose hand was daily in your own !

Gio. Is it ?—

Luc. Giovanni ! who shall set a shore to  
love ?

When hath it ever swerved from death, or when  
Hath it not burned away all barriers,  
Even dearest ties of mother and of son,  
Even of brothers ?—

Gio. [Seizing her arm.] Is it Paolo ?

Luc. You stop the blood in my arm ; release  
your hold.

Gio. [Slowly releasing her arm.]

Ah, gradual nature! let this thought come  
slow!

Accustom me by merciful degrees

To this idea, which henceforth is my home :

I am strong—yet cannot in one moment think it.

Luc. [Softly.] You speak as in a trance.

Gio. Bring me not back !

Like one that walks in sleep, if suddenly

I wake, I die. [With a cry.] Paolo ! Paolo !

Luc. Giovanni !

Gio. Paolo ! ah, no, not there !

Not there, where only I was prone to love !

Beautiful wast thou in the battle, boy !

We came from the same womb, and we have  
slept

Together in the moonbeams ! I have grown

So close to him, my very flesh doth tear !

Why, why, Lucrezia, I have lifted him

Over rough places—he was but a child,

A child that put his hand in mine! I reel—

My little Paolo!

[*He swoons off.*

Luc. Help, help! Ah, no!

I must not call—the foam is on his lips,

The veins outstand—and yet I have a joy,

A bitter joy! I'll lay his head down here.

[*She raises his face, and looks into it.*

Thou wast so rich—now thou art poor as I!

His eyes unclose! Master thyself!

Gio. [*Slowly opening his eyes.*] At last!

As to a soul new-come the murk of hell

Grows more accustomed, gradually light,

So I begin to see amid this gloom.

Let me explore the place and walk in it!

[*He rises slowly to his feet.*

We must live on, Lucrezia—we must still

Pace slowly on, and set our teeth until

Relief is sent.

Luc. Can you stand now, Giovanni?

Gio. You are my friend, my solitary friend

Luc. Am I not lone as you are, without ties ?  
Childless and husbandless, yet bitter-true !

Gio. Be with me still—if Paolo it is !  
Henceforward let no woman bear two sons.  
Yet, wherefore should he go ?

Luc. He feared, perhaps.

Gio. He too, then, feared—and went.

Luc. Now he is gone,  
There's breathing time at least.

Gio. Can I not bind  
Her beauty fast o'er which I 'gin to yearn ?  
Are there not drugs to charm the hearts of  
women ?

Luc. Put her to sleep, and so ensure her faith—  
Yet, then, she'll dream.

Gio. If Paolo it is !

Luc. Lean upon me, Giovanni ; you are weak.

[*Exeunt both, slowly.*

SCENE II.—*A Wayside Inn out of Rimini.*

*View of Rimini in distance, towers flushed with sunset.*

*Enter MARCO and other SOLDIERS, MIRRA,  
and other GIRLS, a SERGEANT.*

A SOLDIER. What! Are we all to say good-bye here, then?

A GIRL. We can come no further out of Rimini.

ANOTHER SOLDIER. We must all have a kiss before we go.

ANOTHER GIRL. Ah! you are ready to kiss us, and you are ready to go.

SOLDIER. That is the soldier's life.

GIRL. To love and go away? Yes, we know you.

MAR. To love and go, and love again, to fight and love again, and go—a good life, too.

A GIRL. Listen to him ! He tells us he will love some one else. Well, we have all had a merry time.

MAR. So we have ; but the world is large. Little Mirra here is not the first or the last.

[*They laugh.*]

A SOLDIER. One last cup of wine all round.

MAR. Come, Mirra, we'll drink together out of this cup. Here's your health, sweetheart, and many other lovers to you.

A GIRL. Ah ! he knows life is short. Isn't he a pretty fellow ?

MAR. [*Sings.*]

O I love not, I, the long road and the march,  
With the chink, chink, chinking, and the parch.  
But I love the little town that springs in sight  
At the falling of the day, with many a light.

It is sweet ! it is sweet—

(Chorus)

Ha, ha ! Ha, ha !

To clatter down the pebbly street,  
When the taverns all are humming,  
And the lads in front are drumming,  
And the windows fill with girls,  
All laughing, and all shaking down their curls.

(Chorus)                    Ha, ha!    Ha, ha!

Then your armour's all unlaced,  
And your arm is round a waist:  
And she seems so much afraid,  
You could swear she was a maid—

SERGEANT. [Interrupting.] Come, lads, give the  
girls the slip: your duty! We must start  
again.

MIR. [Clinging to MARCO.] You will come back  
again, won't you, Marco?

MAR. May and may not, Mirra. Who can tell?

MIR. Because—because—

A GIRL. Look at her—she's crying! Why,  
he was only playing with you.

MIR. I know, I know.

A GIRL. And they say his play has ended in some earnest.

ANOTHER GIRL. Well, what then? Fools must go their own way.

MAR. Good-bye, girls: we have had a merry time.

GIRLS. Good-bye, good-bye! [All *exeunt*.]

*Enter CORRADO, VALENTINO, LUIGI and PAOLO.*

COR. Here's an inn—the first since Rimini. Bring us some wine.

PAO. How straight the road is from here to Rimini! One can see the town at the end.

VAL. Yes, and your brother's castle. [*Enter LANDLORD with wine.*] Come, Lord Paolo, some wine. Why so dull?

PAO. It is that old wound pains me.

COR. [Drinking.] Come, lad, out with it! Is it a debt or a wench? Let me talk with him.

[*Goes over to PAOLO.*] I can advise you, Paolo. I have loved more, owed more, drunk more, and lived more. Confess to me !

LUI. Who would not to so easy a priest ?

VAL. [*To CORRADO.*] Still staring down the road.

COR. [*Whispering.*] I have it, then.

VAL. Corrado says that when a man sits down outside an inn and refuses wine, and stares back along the road he came, he is in love.

COR. Didn't you observe one of those girls as we passed them, crying ? Shame, Paolo ! and in your own town, too !

LUI. He doesn't hear us.

COR. Well, here's a health to her, whoever she is ! Now, Paolo, let me speak to you. I have myself so often felt this—give me a word.

VAL. Pang !

COR. Pang—yes, pang !

LUI. So often ?

COR. More times than I can count. Why, man, I have thriven on pangs. There was the landlord's wife at Ancona; there was the little black-eyed girl out of Florence. To look at me, you would scarcely suppose that I have left half the cities of Italy sighing behind me. I have suffered, and I have inflicted. There was—

LUI. O, Corrado! Not these old stories.

COR. Well, the fruit of all this! You must know that love is a thing physical. It can be sweated out of a man by hard riding; it evaporates from the body like any humour.

VAL. Ha! ha!

COR. My advice is this—fill up, drink, and get to fighting quickly; and if, after a bottle or so, you have taken a girl on your knee in the twilight—Why, Paolo! consider you have left behind you, perhaps, another soldier for your brother's wars. You have done a brotherly act, and—

PAO. [*Rising.*] Corrado, we have been fast comrades, and I think you know me ; but another word of this and there will be an end of talk between us—you understand ?

COR. O ! ho !

VAL. I tell you—you see, it is one of those serious matters, where the spirit is more concerned than the flesh. Come, Paolo, let us have it !

COR. Before he begins, I think it would be more fitting if we uncovered our heads, for the recitation is likely to be solemn.

LUI. Come, come, we must be going !

COR. God send us another inn soon.

[*Exeunt CORRADO and VALENTINO.*

LUI. Give me your hand, Paolo—you know me. Tell me the trouble.

PAO. I cannot, Luigi.

LUI. Have you fallen out with your brother ? You and he were such friends.

PAO. No.

LUI. Is it the young wife that he has married, and now he seems more cold to you ? But this is natural at first. How can I help you ?

PAO. No one can help me, Luigi.

LUI. Up, and lead us on, then !

PAO. I will catch you in a moment.

LUI. I am very sorry, Paolo. [Exit LUIGI.

PAO. I have fled from her ; have refused the rose,

Although my brain was reeling at the scent.  
I have come hither as through pains of death ;  
I have died, and I am gazing back at life.  
Yet now it were so easy to return,  
And run down the white road to Rimini !  
And might I not return ? [He starts up and looks  
at the towers, red with sunset.] Those battle-  
ments

Are burning ! they catch fire, those parapets !  
And through the blaze doth her white face look out

Like one forgot, yet possible to save.  
Might I not then return ? Ah, no ! no ! no !  
For I should tremble to be touched by her,  
And dread the music of her mere good-night.  
Howe'er I sentinelled my bosom, yet  
That moment would arrive when instantly  
Our souls would flash together in one flame,  
And I should pour this torrent in her ear  
And suddenly catch her to my heart.

[*A drum is heard.*

A drum !

O, there is still a world of men for a man !  
I'll lose her face in flashing brands, her voice  
In charging cries : I'll rush into the war !

[*SOLDIERS pass across the stage. Seeing PAOLO, they cheer and call him by name—then exeunt. He makes to follow, then stops.*

I cannot go ; thrilling from Rimini,  
A tender voice makes all the trumpets mute.

I cannot go from her : may not return.  
O God ! what is Thy will upon me ? Ah !  
One path there is, a straight path to the dark.  
There, in the ground, I can betray no more,  
And there for ever am I pure and cold.  
The means ! No dagger blow, nor violence shown  
Upon my body to distress her eyes.  
Under some potion gently will I die ;  
And they that find me dead shall lay me down  
Beautiful as a sleeper at her feet.

**CURTAIN.**



## **ACT III**



**SCENE I.—***The shop of PULCI, late evening.* The walls and ceiling are hung with skins, sharks' teeth, crucibles, wax figures, crystals, charms, &c. A counter, at which TESSA stands. As the scene opens figures are seen leaving the shop. Three PEASANT GIRLS and a LADY'S MAID remain.

TESSA. I must ask you to choose quickly. It is past the hour for closing the shop.

1st GIRL. And will this syrup keep Antonio faithful?

TESSA. Two drops of this in anything he drinks, given every seven days, and he will have no eyes but for you.

1st GIRL. But will it keep his thoughts true while I am away?

TESSA. Wherever he may be his thoughts will be for you.

1ST GIRL. Ah, but you don't know Antonio. He is so easily led off—any face if it is fresh—any fool with bright eyes.

TESSA. These drops will keep even Antonio faithful.

1ST GIRL. I'll take it, then: it must be a wonderful syrup. [Exit 1ST GIRL.]

TESSA. [To MAID.] And you?

MAID. I wondered how long I was to be made to wait for these common chattering wenches. I want another packet of that face-bloom for my mistress, and a darker shade. The other makes her appear hectic.

TESSA. This, then, has a darker tinge.

MAID. And you are to tell your father that the dye he sent withers her hair. He must add more oil.

TESSA. I will tell him. Good-night.

MAID. Good-night to you. [Exit MAID.

2nd GIRL. [Holding out charm.] What is this charm ?

TESSA. It will ensure you against ague, fever, or infection, and not only this, but against peril of any kind. It is worn round the neck, and at the approach of danger it will tremble and give you a sign.

2nd GIRL. O, I must have that. Will this money be enough to-day if I bring the rest next week ?

TESSA. If the charm is not paid for soon it will lose its power. Take it, and remember.

[Exit 2nd GIRL.

Now you—quickly, please—what do you want ?

3rd GIRL. I want a cure for love. Are they very expensive ?

TESSA. We have some that will cure of love in a few hours; but these will cost you a great deal.

3rd GIRL. It is terrible not to be able to sleep at nights.

TESSA. Here is one that will bring you back sleep, and cure you entirely in a few weeks—one that you could afford.

3rd GIRL. I don't think I want to be cured entirely—and yet one never knows what one may come to when it grows late and there is music and dancing. It is hard to resist under the moon.

TESSA. Come, now—will you take it?

3rd GIRL. [Taking phial.] I think I'll have it, and take it very slowly.

TESSA. There, then!

3rd GIRL. There's money saved for six weeks.  
Ah, well!

[Exit 3rd GIRL. TESSA, after barring up door, goes to glass.

TESSA. Now I can play for awhile. [She puts some bloom on her face.] O, but this bloom is beautiful! And how it makes one's eyes

sparkle ! Now this red salve for the lips—that is just what I lacked. My lips are too pale—but now ! Where is that pencil ? Here. Shall I lengthen my eyebrows, curving them so ? No : I will only deepen them. There, then ! [She walks up and down before a glass, then sits dejectedly.] Yet what is the use of all this ? I am never seen, may not stir into the streets. And I want to be seen, and hear music and—

PUL. [Entering down the stairs with a lighted brazier.] Tessa !

TESSA. Yes, father.

PUL. Have I not forbidden you to touch these powders ?

TESSA. Ah, but look at me, father. Am I always to stay shut up here, where no one comes but maids of fine ladies and girls from the shops ?

PUL. My child, we must be patient a little

longer. Listen! Soon we shall be rich, and then we will fly Rimini, and far from here we will have a palace—*[A knock.]* Tessa, go to your room instantly.

TESSA. *[Lingering.]* May I not stay and see who it is?

PUL. It is only some lady's-maid.

TESSA. No, father, I think it is a gentleman.

PUL. Quickly! quickly!

*[Exit TESSA. PULCI puts out light and lights a lamp; he slowly unbars the door. Enter GIOVANNI, masked and cloaked. PULCI closes door after him.*

PUL. Has no one seen you enter, sir?

Gio. No one.

PUL. Softly! What do you seek?

Gio. Some dreamy potion

That can enthrall a woman's wandering heart  
And all her thought subdue to me.

PUL. [Producing phial.] This poured  
In her night drink will woo her to your arms.  
One amorous night at least it will procure.

GIO. One night!—what use of that? Each  
day, each night  
Must she be mine.

PUL. But one more drug I have—  
[Searches for another phial.]

GIO. [Aside.] I must beguile, it seems, my  
wedded wife,

And lure into my arms what is my own.

PUL. [Offering another phial.] This, then will  
purchase some infatuate days.

GIO. Some days!

PUL. No tincture longer holds the blood.

GIO. Here is a purse. [Throws purse of coins.

PUL. Ah! get you quickly gone.  
[As they approach the door a knock is  
heard.

See! I will slowly now unbar the door,

And whoso enters past him slip away  
Into the night.

GIO. [Stops PULCI.] I must not meet a stranger.

[*Takes off mask.*

Hither! look on my face.

PUL. [Falling on his knees.] Mercy, great Lord!  
Take not my life—this commerce after hours  
Is for my child.

GIO. Hide me, and instantly.

PUL. [Hiding him behind the arras.] Here,  
then. [Another knock.] And, sir, secrets of  
Rimini  
And unsuspected movings of your subjects  
You can o'erhear. I'll draw him on to speak—  
Only stir not. [Unbars door; enter PAOLO.]

Warily, sir.

PAO. Old man——

GIO. Paolo's voice!

PAO. What is that sound? This business  
Is for no ear but yours.

PUL.

If any stirred

It was my child preparing her for bed.

PAO. If any hear me, it were ill for him !

Old man, there is within this purse a calm

Decline for thee to death, and quiet hours.

Take it, and give me in exchange some drug

That can fetch down on us the eternal sleep,

Anticipating the slow mind of God.

PUL. Is this thing for thyself, or for another ?

PAO. 'Tis for myself !

PUL.

I will not sell to murder.

But unto any weary of their life

I sell a painless issue out of it.

Yet you are young !

PAO.

Think you the old would die ?

At any cost they would prolong the light.

'Tis we, in whose pure blood the fever takes,

Newly inoculate with violent life,

'Tis we who are so mad to die.

PUL.

'Tis true

I would not lose a moment of the sun.

What hath so early ruined you ?

PAO.

Old sir,

I am on my death-bed, and to you confess,—

Love, where to love is extreme treachery—

Love for another's wife.

PUL.

Nothing so strange.

PAO. Yes, for she is my brother's wife—my  
sister.

GIO. [Aside.] Thou hast said it !

PAO.

O, I cannot near her bide

But infinite her lightest whisper grows.

There's peril in the rustling of her dress.

PUL. And are you, too, beloved ?

PAO.

She hath said no word,

But should I stay, she would catch fire from me.

PUL. Why all's before you—yet you yield up  
breath.

PAO. I cannot go from her ; I must not stay.  
To die is left !

PUL. For such a drug the price—

PAO. Usher me to oblivion !

[Shows purse with gold.]

PUL. [Reaching down phial.] This drunk off  
Within an hour will terminate thy woe.

PAO. [Taking phial which PULCI hands him.]  
Unbar the door ! How the night rushes in !

[Exit PAOLO.]

PUL. [To GIOVANNI.] I'll follow him. If sud-  
denly he drink  
He must not fall and lie too near my door.

[Exit PULCI.]

GIO. [Coming from behind arras.] All doubt at  
last is o'er ! He hath said it out !  
Almost I had my dagger in his heart !  
Yet sooner than betray, he is gone to death.  
[Wildly.] I cannot have thee die, my Paolo !  
Perhaps even now he drinks : even now the  
phial  
Touches his lips—ah, brother, dash it down !

How much, then, hast thou drunk? Not yet enough—

Not yet enough—I know—for death? Which way

Went he—I'll follow him. [*Rushes to door, then pauses.*] Yet, O my God!

It must be so! How else? He is so bound  
To her, he cannot fly!—he must not stay!  
He has gone out upon the only road.

And this is my relief! O dread relief!

Thus only am I pure of brother's blood!

I must be still while he goes out to die!—

And yet be still—while he who is most dear  
Drinks poison—yet I must be very still!

*Re-enter PULCI.*

PUL. I watched till he was mingled with the night.

GIO. Tell me! Is he that's gone so sure to die?

PUL. Within an hour, so potent is the drug !

[*Fawning on Gio.*] You on more pleasant business  
came to me.

We who are older at such madness laugh.

GIO. I stifle here !

PUL. Tyrant of Rimini !

You will not kill me ?

GIO. Till to-morrow night

I stay my hand. Which way went he—that  
fool ?

PUL. Straight on ; he never turned until I lost  
him. [*Exit GIOVANNI.*]

Tessa !

TESSA. [*Running in.*] Yes, father.

PUL. Now you have your wish ;  
To-morrow must we run from Rimini.

TESSA. To-morrow night the world then—  
the bright world !

[*PULCI pours the gold out on the counter.*

SCENE II.—*A lane outside the wall of the castle garden, postern door in the wall.*

*Enter PAOLO.*

PAO. There is no other means: but ah, the pain !

Here is the garden where her lattice shines.  
Perchance she looks toward me now, and makes  
A music upon midnight with my name.  
Perchance she leans into the air and sighs.  
O, now is she attired in purest white,  
Hanging above our heads 'twixt earth and heaven !  
Life, life ! I cannot leave thee, for she lives.  
At least I must behold her before death ;  
And go straight from her face into the grave—  
Straight from her touch at least into the ground.  
Much is permitted to a man condemned.  
I'll see her, hear her, touch her ere I die.

[*Exit PAOLO through postern-door into the gardens.*

*Enter two COURIERS hastily with torches.*

1st COUR. Which way now?

2nd COUR. Stay, I am out of breath.

1st COUR. At such a moment, that Lord Malatesta cannot be found!

2nd COUR. I must get my breath against this door. Have you the papers?

1st COUR. Here. Lately married, yet out of his bed at this hour!

2nd COUR. Ah, I wish I were back with—

1st COUR. Hush! here is Carlo.

*Enter CARLO.*

Well, no sign of him?

CAR. None.

And I am aguish, and these night dews!

1st COUR. Stay!

CAR. What?

1st COUR. Listen! I tell you.

2nd COUR. A step!

CAR. It is he, Lord Malatesta.

*Enter GIOVANNI slowly.*

CAR. Great lord, we have pursued you up and down. Here's news that will not stay.

[*Gives him letter.*

GIO. Hold the torch nearer. [Reads.] "Tyrant of Rimini! All Pesaro is risen against the tax laid on them. Our men are beaten behind the city walls—the city itself declares for Cosimo. We wait but for you: a noise of your coming—a sight of you—and the city will fall to us again. Linger not a moment.—ANDREA." Carlo, muster every man within call. Then to the palace—saddle my horse. Summon all in the house to follow you: rouse them from their beds; they must ride with me instantly.

[*Exeunt CARLO and COURIERS. Enter running two MESSENGERS from other side.*

A MESSENGER. Lord and tyrant of Rimini! We are come on you none too soon—we are ridden from the camp—our horses stand—there was no moment to write, but this by word of mouth: “Your garrison makes terms with the enemy: many are already gone over, and we fear for San Arcangelo and the whole province.”

Gio. Get a cup of wine, both of you, and be prepared to ride with me within the half-hour. I'll fall like thunder on Pesaro, and catch San Arcangelo with the wind of it. [Exit one MESSENGER. GIOVANNI to the other.] Stay you, sir! and tell me more exactly as we hurry on. Where is Andrea now, then? There is a vantage-ground just out of Pesaro, and there——

[*Exeunt GIOVANNI and MESSENGER.*]

SCENE III.—*An Arbour in the Castle Gardens.*

*Dawn beginning to break.*

*Enter FRANCESCA with a book, NITA following with lamp.*

FRANC. I cannot sleep, Nita ; I will read here.  
Is it dawn yet ? [NITA sets lamp down.  
NITA. No, lady : yet I see  
A flushing in the East.

FRANC. How still it is !

NITA. This is the stillest time of night or day.

FRANC. Know you why, Nita ?

NITA. No, my lady.

FRANC. Now  
Day in a breathless passion kisses night,  
And neither speaks.

NITA. Shall I stay here ?

FRANC. Ah, no !  
Perhaps in the dawn silence I shall drowse.  
If not, I'll read this legend to myself.

NITA. Is it a pretty tale ?

FRANC. Pretty, ah no !

Nita ; but beautiful and passing sad.

NITA. I love sad tales : though I am gay, I love  
Sometimes to weep. But is it of our time ?

FRANC. It is an ancient tale of two long dead.

NITA. O, 'tis a tale of love !

FRANC. Of love, indeed.

But, Nita, leave me to myself : I think  
I would have no one stirring near me now.

[*Exit NITA.*

The light begins, but he is far away.

[*She walks to and fro.*

Better than tossing in that vacant room  
Is this cool air and fragrance ere the dawn.  
Where is the page which I had reached ? Ah,  
here !

Now let me melt into an ancient woe.

[*Begins to read. Enter PAOLO*  
**PAO.** Francesca !

FRANC.                    Paolo ! I thought you now  
Gone into battle dim, far, far away.

PAO. And seems it strange that I should come,  
then ?

FRANC. No,  
It seems that it could not be otherwise.

PAO. I went indeed ; but some few miles from  
hence

Turned, and could go no further. All this night  
About the garden have I roamed and burned.  
And now, at last, sleepless and without rest,  
I steal to you.

FRANC.                    Sleepless and without rest !

PAO. It seemed that I must see your face again  
Then nevermore ; that I must hear your voice,  
And then no more ; that I must touch your  
hand,

Once. No one stirs within the house ; no one  
In all this world but you and I, Francesca.  
We two have to each other moved all night,

FRANC. I moved not to you, Paolo.

PAO. But night

Guided you on, and onward beckoned me.

What is that book you read? Now fades the  
last

Star to the East: a mystic breathing comes:

And all the leaves once quivered, and were  
still.

FRANC. It is the first, the faint stir of the dawn.

PAO. So still it is that we might almost hear  
The sigh of all the sleepers in the world.

FRANC. And all the rivers running to the sea.

PAO. What is't you read?

FRANC. It is an ancient tale.

PAO. Show it to me. Is it some drowsy page  
That reading low I might persuade your eyes  
At last to sleep?

FRANC. It is the history  
Of two who fell in love long years ago;  
And wrongly fell.

PAO. How wrongly?

FRANC. Because she  
Already was a wife, and he who loved  
Was her own husband's dear familiar friend.

PAO. Was it so long ago?

FRANC. So long ago.

PAO. What were their famous and unlucky  
names?

FRANC. Men called him Launcelot, her Guene-  
vere.

Here is the page where I had ceased to read.

PAO. [Taking book.] Their history is blotted  
with new tears.

FRANC. The tears are mine: I know not why I  
wept.

But these two were so glad in their wrong  
love:

It was their joy; it was their helpless joy.

PAO. Shall I read on to you where you have  
paused?

FRANC. Here is the place: but read it low and sweet.

Put out the lamp! [PAOLO *puts out the lamp.*]

PAO. The glimmering page is clear.

[*Reading.*] "Now on that day it chanced that  
Launcelot,

Thinking to find the King, found Guenevere  
Alone; and when he saw her whom he loved,  
Whom he had met too late, yet loved the more;  
Such was the tumult at his heart that he  
Could speak not, for her husband was his friend,  
His dear familiar friend: and they two held  
No secret from each other until now;  
But were like brothers born"—my voice breaks  
off.

Read you a little on.

FRANC. [*Reading.*] "And Guenevere,  
Turning, beheld him suddenly whom she  
Loved in her thought, and even from that hour  
When first she saw him; for by day, by night,

Though lying by her husband's side, did she  
Weary for Launcelot, and knew full well  
How ill that love, and yet that love how deep!"  
I cannot see—the page is dim : read you.

PAO. [Reading.] "Now they two were alone,  
yet could not speak ;  
But heard the beating of each other's hearts.  
He knew himself a traitor but to stay,  
Yet could not stir : she pale and yet more pale  
Grew till she could no more, but smiled on him.  
Then when he saw that wished smile, he came  
Near to her and still near, and trembled ; then  
Her lips all trembling kissed."

FRANC. [Drooping towards him.] Ah, Launce-  
lot ! [He kisses her on the lips.]

CURTAIN.

## **ACT IV**



*A Chamber in the Palace—late evening of the  
second day after GIOVANNI's departure.*

GIOVANNI discovered, stained as from hard riding.

CARLO and RETAINERS attending him. Wine  
on table.

GIO. The Lady Lucrezia—is she in the  
house?

CAR. She is, sir.

GIO. Tell her that I am returned,  
And ask some words with her. Well, why do  
you

Stand bursting with some news that you must  
tell?

What sudden thing has happened?

CAR. Nothing, sir.

Gio. Nothing? You then that huddle all  
together,

Like cattle against thunder—what hath chanced?

AN ATTENDANT. I know of nothing, sir.

2nd ATTEN. Nor I.

3rd ATTEN. Nor I.

Gio. Leave me and take my message!

[*Exeunt CARLO and ATTENDANTS.*

Lies he so

Quiet that none hath found him? They are  
driven

Out from the city and are fugitives.

Ne'er did I strike and hew as yesterday,

And that armed ghost of Paolo by me rode.

[*He pours out wine and drinks.*

*Enter LUCREZIA.*

Luc. So soon returned, Giovanni?

Gio. A few hours'

Fast fighting ended it, Lucrezia.

What news at home ?

Luc. O, Paolo is returned !

Gio. Paolo returned ! What, from the grave ?

Luc. The grave ?

Gio. I left him dead, or going to his death.

Luc. What do you mean ?

Gio. I heard from his own mouth

That he and she did for each other burn.

Luc. He told you ?

Gio. No, not me : but yet I heard.

Luc. And you on the instant killed him ?

Gio. No, he stole  
Away to die : I thought him dead : 'twere better.  
Now like a thief he creeps back to the house !  
To her for whom I had begun to long  
So late in life that now I may not cease  
From longing !

Luc. Her that you must drug to kiss !

Will you not smell the potion in her sigh ?

A few more drops, then what a mad caress !

GIO. He hath crept back like a thief into the house—

A thief—a liar—he feigned the will to die.  
Lucrezia, when old Angela foretold,  
I feared not him: when he was pointed at,  
I doubted still: even after his own words,  
Then, then had I forgiven him, for he  
Went out as to a grave. But now I am changed—  
I will be wary of this creeping thing.  
O, I have no emotion now, no blood.  
No longer I postpone or fight this doom:  
I see that it must be, and I am grown  
The accomplice and the instrument of Fate,  
A blade! a knife!—no more.

Luc.

He has been here

Since yestermorn.

GIO. Yet I'll be no assassin,  
Or rashly kill: I have not seen them kiss.  
I'll wait to find them in each other's arms,  
And stab them there enfolded and entwined,

And so to all men justify my deed.

Yet how to find them where to kill is just?

Luc. Give out that this is no return, but  
merely

An intermission of the war: that you  
Must ride back to the camp within the hour,  
And for some days be absent: he and she  
Will seize upon the dark and lucky hour  
To be together: watch you round the house,  
And suddenly take them in each other's arms.

Gio. This plan commends itself to my cold  
heart.

Luc. Here comes Francesca. Shall I stay,  
then?

Gio. Stay !

*Enter FRANCESCA.*

FRANC. Sir, you have asked for me. I did not  
know

You were so soon returned.

Gio. Soldiers' returns

Are sudden and oft unexpected.

FRANC.

Sir,

How pale you are! You are not wounded?

GIO.

No!

A scratch perhaps. Give me some wine, Francesca,

For suddenly I must be gone again.

FRANC. I thought this broil was ended?

GIO.

No! not yet.

Some days I may be absent, and can go

More lightly since I leave you not alone.

To Paolo I commend you, to my brother.

Loyal he is to me, loyal and true.

He has also a gaiety of mind

Which I have ever lacked: he is beside

More suited to your years, can sing and play,

And has the art long hours to entertain.

To him I leave you, and must go forthwith.

[*He makes to go, then turns*

Come here, Francesca, kiss me—yet not so,

You put your lips up to me like a child.

FRANC. 'Tis not so long ago I was a child.

[*Seizing his arm.*

O sir, is it wise, is it well to go away ?

GIO. What do you mean ?

FRANC. I have a terror here.

GIO. Can you not bear to part with me some hours ?

FRANC. I dread to be alone : I fear the night  
And yon great chamber, the resort of spirits.  
I see men hunted on the air by hounds :  
Thin faces of your house, with weary smiles.  
The dead who frown I fear not : but I fear  
The dead who smile ! The very palace rocks,  
Remembering at midnight, and I see  
Women within these walls immured alive  
Come starving to my bed and ask for food.

GIO. Take some one then to sleep with you—

Lucrezia,

Or little Nita else : lie not alone.

FRANC. [Still detaining him.] Yet go not, sir.

GIO. What is it that you fear ?

FRANC. Sir, go not, go not !

GIO. Child, I cannot stay  
For fancies, and at once I'll say farewell  
To both of you. I hear my courser fret.

[Exit GIOVANNI.]

FRANC. [Looking after him, and turning slowly.]  
Lucrezia, will you lie with me to-night ?

LUC. I will, Francesca, if you'll have it so.

FRANC. O, some one I can touch in the thick  
night !—

What sound is that ?

LUC. [Going to window.] Your husband gal-  
loping

Away into the dark [She looks from the window,  
then turns] : now he is gone.

I left young Paolo pacing up and down ;

[Looking steadfastly at her.]

He seemed as faint for company as you.

Say, shall I call him in as I go out ?

He will help waste the tardy time.

FRANC. [Quickly.]

No, no !

Luc. Is there some little feud 'twixt you and  
him ?

For when you meet words slowly come to you—  
You scarce look in each other's eyes.

FRANC.

No feud.

Luc. Remember, when Giovanni married you  
These two were to each other all in all ;  
And so excuse some natural jealousy  
Of you from him.

FRANC. I think he means me well.

Luc. Then shall I call him in ?

FRANC. O, why so eager ?

Where would all those about me drive me ? First  
My husband earnestly to Paolo  
Commends me ; and now you must call him in.  
[Wildly] Where can I look for pity ? Lucrezia,  
You have no children ?

LUC.                    None.

FRANC.                Nor ever had ?

LUC. Nor ever had.

FRANC.                But yet you are a woman.

I have no mother : let me be your child

To-night : I am so utterly alone !

Be gentle with me ; or if not, at least

Let me go home ; this world is difficult.

O, think of me as of a little child

That looks into your face, and asks your hand.

[LUCREZIA *softly touches* FRANCESCA'S  
hair.

Why do you touch my head ? Why do you weep ?

I would not pain you.

LUC.                    Ah, Francesca ! You  
Have touched me where my life is quivering most.  
I have no child : and yet if I had borne one  
I could have wished her hair had been this colour.

FRANC. I am too suddenly cast in this whirl !  
Too suddenly ! I had but convent thoughts.

O woman, woman, take me to you and hold me !

[*She throws herself into LUCREZIA's arms.*

Luc. [*Clasping FRANCESCA to her.*] At last the  
long ice melts, and O relief

Of rain that rushes from me ! Child, my child !

I clasp you close, close—do you fear me still ?

Have you not heard love is more fierce than hate ?

Roughly I grasp what I have hunted long.

You cannot know—how should you ?—that you  
are

More, so much more, to me than just a child.

FRANC. I seem to understand a little.

Luc. Close,

I hold you close : it was not all in vain,

The holy babble and pillow kissed all o'er !

O my embodied dream with eyes and hair !

Visible aspiration with soft hands ;

Tangible vision ! O, art thou alive,

Francesca, dost thou move and breathe ? Speak  
speak !

Say human words out, lest thou vanish quite !  
Your very flesh is of my sighs composed,  
Your blood is crimson with my passioning !  
And now I have conceived and have brought  
forth ;  
And I exult in front of the great sun :  
And I laugh out with riches in my lap !  
And you will deem me mad ! but do not, Sweet :  
I am not mad, only I am most happy.  
I'll dry my tears—but O, if thou should'st die ?  
[*Aside.*] And ah my God !

FRANC.

Why did you start ?

LUC. [*Aside.*]

To stay him !

[*To FRANCESCA, taking her hands.*] But I should  
be the shadow of a mother  
If here I ceased. Francesca, I well know  
That 'twixt bright Paolo and dark Giovanni  
You stand—you hinted at some peril there.  
I ask to know no more : but take these words—  
Be not in company with Paolo

To-night. [*Aside.*] Giovanni must be found.

My child,

I have some business on the moment, but

Within the hour I will return—[*Aside.*] How  
find him ?

And sleep with you—[*Aside.*] I'll search all  
secret places.

Kiss me. Remember, then ! [*Aside.*] 'Tis not  
too late !

What meshes have I woven for what I love ?

[*Exit LUCREZIA.*

*Enter NITA on the other side, with a lamp.*

NITA. Lady, shall I come in ?

FRANC. Set the lamp here,  
Nita, and take some sewing : I am alone  
To-night, and you shall sit with me until  
Lucrezia is returned. What lamp is that ?

NITA. It is the same I set you in the arbour  
That night you could not sleep.

FRANC. Yes, I remember.

NITA. Are you unhappy, mistress ?

FRANC. I am lonely,

Nita, most lonely.

NITA. That were easily—  
Pardon the saying, mistress—remedied.

FRANC. And how ?  
NITA. If I myself were married young,  
Perhaps without my leave to some old man,  
And found a younger gallant in the house,  
I think I would not shun him.

FRANC. Well, say on.  
NITA. No ! And I think I would maintain  
some show  
Of love to my grey husband : it is easy  
To keep in humour an old man—a kiss,  
A little look, a word will satisfy,  
And I would have my pleasure.

FRANC. I have listened  
So far to you : you do not understand.

O Nita, when we women sin, 'tis not  
By art; it is not easy, it is not light;  
It is an agony shot through with bliss:  
We sway and rock and suffer ere we fall.

[*She walks up and down.*

NITA. I scarcely understand, my lady. I  
Am ever gay, and this is a gay world;  
And if we girls are prudent but a little,  
'Tis easy to enjoy. [A knock.]

FRANC. Who knocked, then? See!

NITA [*Going to door and returning.*] It is Lord  
Paolo who asks for you.

FRANC. Tell him I cannot see him. Is he  
gone?

NITA. Yes, and so sad! He sighed so [*sighs*],  
and he went.

Shall I now call him back?

FRANC. No, no! Sit down.

[*Speaking quickly.*] Tell me some story, Nita.

NITA. Alas! I cannot:

Only the village talk I can repeat,  
And how—

FRANC. [Starting.] Listen ! What step is that  
without ?

A sad step, and it goeth to and fro.  
Look out !

NITA. It is Lord Paolo, my lady.

FRANC. [Quickly.] Come from the window !  
[Aside.] O where tarries she,

This new-found mother ? Tell me then this tale !

NITA. Lucia, my sister, has a lover whom  
She thought so true : but he the other night—

FRANC. Listen again !

PAO. [Without.] Francesca !

NITA. 'Tis his voice !

My lady, you are trembling !

FRANC. [Aside.] Why did he  
Speak ? The sweet sound has floated to my  
brain.

PAO. Francesca !

FRANC. [*Aside.*] Soft it comes out of the night.  
Go to the window, Nita. What says he ?

NITA. He does entreat he may come in to you  
A moment. Shall I answer ?

FRANC. [*Walking to and fro and putting her hand to her heart.*] Let him come.

NITA. I will go tell him. [*Aside.*] They'll not want me : I

Can meet Bernardo now. [Exit NITA.]

FRANC. O voice too sweet !

And like the soul of midnight sending words !  
Now all the world is at her failing hour,  
And at her faintest : now the pulse is low !  
Now the tide turns, and now the soul goes home !  
And I to Paolo am fainting back !  
A moment—but a moment—then no more !

*Enter PAOLO.*

PAO. I am by music led into this room,  
And beckoned sweetly : all the breezes die

Round me, and in immortal ecstasy  
Toward thee I move : now am I free and gay—  
Light as a dancer when the strings begin.

FRANC. What glow is on thy face, what sudden  
light ?

PAO. It seems that I am proof against all perils.

FRANC. And yet I fear to see thy air so glad.

PAO. To-night all points of swords to me are  
dull.

FRANC. And still I dread the bravery of your  
words.

Kiss me, and leave me, Paolo, to-night.

PAO. What do you fear ?

FRANC. One watches quietly.

PAO. Who ?

FRANC. I know not : perhaps the quiet face  
Of God : the eternal Listener is near.

PAO. I'll struggle now no more. Have I not  
fought

Against thee as a foe most terrible ?

Parried the nimble thrust and thought of thee,  
And from thy mortal sweetness fled away,  
Yet evermore returned? Now all the bonds  
Which held me I cast off—honour, esteem,  
All ties, all friendships, peace, and life itself.  
You only in this universe I want.

FRANC. You fill me with a glorious rashness.

What!

Shall we two, then, take up our fate and smile?

PAO. Remember how when first we met we  
stood

Stung with immortal recollections.

O face immured beside a fairy sea,  
That leaned down at dead midnight to be kissed!  
O beauty folded up in forests old!

*Thou* wast the lovely quest of Arthur's  
knights—

FRANC. Thy armour glimmered in a gloom of  
green.

PAO. Did I not sing to thee in Babylon?

FRANC. Or did we set a sail in Carthage bay?

PAO. Were thine eyes strange?

FRANC. Did I not know thy voice?

All ghostly grew the sun, unreal the air

Then when we kissed.

PAO. And in that kiss our souls  
Together flashed, and now they are one flame,  
Which nothing can put out, nothing divide.

FRANC. Kiss me again! I smile at what may  
chance.

PAO. Again, and yet again! and here and here.  
Let me with kisses burn this body away,  
That our two souls may dart together free.  
I fret at intervention of the flesh,  
And I would clasp you—you that but inhabit  
This lovely house.

FRANC. Break open then the door,  
And let my spirit out. Paolo, kill me!  
Then kill thyself: to vengeance leave these weeds,  
And let our souls together soar away.

PAO. [Recoiling.] You are too beautiful for  
human blow! [FRANCESCA starts.

Why did you shiver and turn sudden cold?

FRANC. [Slowly.] I felt a wind pass over me.

PAO. I too:

Colder than any summer night could give.

FRANC. A solitary wind: and it hath passed.

PAO. [Embracing her.] Do you still fear?

FRANC. Ah, Paolo! if we  
Should die to-night, then whither would our souls  
Repair? There is a region which priests tell of  
Where such as we are punished without end.

PAO. Were we together, what can punish us?

FRANC. Nothing! Ah! think not I can love  
you less—

Only I fear.

PAO. What can we fear, we two?  
O God, Thou seest us Thy creatures bound  
Together by that law which holds the stars  
In palpitating cosmic passion bright;

By which the very sun enthrals the earth,  
And all the waves of the world faint to the moon.  
Even by such attraction we two rush  
Together through the everlasting years.  
Us, then, whose only pain can be to part,  
How wilt Thou punish ? For what ecstasy  
Together to be blown about the globe !  
What rapture in perpetual fire to burn  
Together !—where we are is endless fire.  
There centuries shall in a moment pass,  
And all the cycles in one hour elapse !  
Still, still together, even when faints Thy sun,  
And past our souls Thy stars like ashes fall,  
How wilt Thou punish us who cannot part ?

FRANC. I lie out on your arm and say your  
name—

“ Paolo ! ” “ Paolo ! ”

PAO.

“ Francesca ! ”

[They slowly pass through the curtains.

A pause.

*Enter NITA.*

NITA.

Ah!

Where are my lady and Lord Paolo ?  
Gone out into the moonlight ! It is well  
For her to meet her lover when she choose :  
And I must run in from Bernardo's arms.  
'Tis very late ! I'll sit and end this sewing—  
I cannot work. [Walks up and down.] Where  
can my mistress be ?

[NITA touches abstractedly the strings of  
a mandolin.

LUCREZIA enters hurriedly.

Luc. [Aside.] O he is subtly hidden—and  
where ?—and where ?

I have set that on which now I cannot stay.

Nita, you are alone ! Where is your mistress ?

NITA. I cannot tell, my lady.

Luc. Look in my eyes !

You left her ?

NITA. But a moment.

LUC. And alone ?

NITA. Lord Paolo—

LUC. [Seizing her arm.] Ah !

NITA. My lady, hurt me not.

LUC. Stammer the truth out !

NITA. He came to the door—

LUC. No further ?

NITA. And she sighed out, "Let him come."

LUC. And you left them together ?

NITA. I went out—

LUC. Together then ! Now, now ! Quick, dry  
those tears

For we must use our wit.

NITA. And you, too, tremble !

LUC. And he—Lord Malatesta ?

NITA. Know you not

He hath ridden off to the camp ?

LUC. But might return !

NITA. [Trembling.] O, but he must not !

Luc. Yet some accident—

NITA. There would be noise and stir at his return.

Luc. You have heard no sound? Remember fiercely! Nothing?

I do not mean of hooves, nor armour chink—

You have heard not even a step?

NITA. [Trembling.] What mean you?—No.

Luc. Not even a soft step?

NITA. I am faint with fear.

[She staggers.

Luc. [Seizing her hand.] Which way went they, these two?

NITA. I cannot tell.

Luc. This door is fast!—then through the curtains?

NITA. Yes.

Luc. They seem to tremble still! Come with me, quick!

NITA. I am faint.

LUC.                   Come with me.

[*She drags her to the curtain.*

Ah! whose hand is that?

[*GIOVANNI, parting the curtains from the other side, comes slowly through.*

NITA. O sir! we had not thought you back so soon.

GIO. Where is your mistress?

NITA,                   Sir, I cannot tell.

GIO. Is it not time you dressed her all in white,  
And combed out her long hair as for a sleep?

NITA. 'Tis past the hour.

GIO.                   You have a curl awry,  
And falling o'er your eyebrow—bind it up.

NITA. I cannot, sir.

GIO.                   Well, leave us: when your mistress  
Is ready, I will call for you.

[*Exit NITA. There is a pause, in which*

*GIOVANNI and LUCREZIA gaze at each other.*

Luc. [Going slowly up to him.] O, sir !  
I would beseech of you—[She starts.] Ah !  
Giovanni,  
You have hurt your hand : there's blood upon it  
here. [Takes his hand and looks at it.]  
Gio. 'Tis not my blood !  
Luc. O, then——  
Gio. “O, then !” is all.  
[As in a frenzy.] And now their love that was so  
secret close  
Shall be proclaimed. Tullio, Carlo, Biagi !—  
They shall be married before all men. Nita !  
Rouse up the house and bring in lights, lights,  
lights !  
There shall be music, feasting and dancing.  
Wine shall be drunk. Candles, I say ! More  
lights !  
More marriage lights ! Where tarry they the  
while,  
The nuptial tapers ? Rouse up all the house !

[*All this while SERVANTS and others, half dressed, are continually rushing in with lights and torches. They stand whispering.*

Gio. [Slowly.] Carlo, go through the curtains,  
and pass in

To the great sleeping-chamber: you shall find  
Two there together lying: place them, then,  
Upon some litter and have them hither brought  
With ceremony.

[*Exeunt CARLO and Four SERVANTS.*  
GIOVANNI paces to and fro.

The curse, the curse of Cain !  
A restlessness has come into my blood,  
And I begin to wander from this hour  
Alone for evermore.

Luc. [Rushing to him.] Giovanni, say  
Quickly some light thing, lest we both go mad !

Gio. Be still ! A second wedding here begins,  
And I would have all reverent and seemly :

For they were nobly born, and deep in love.

*Enter blind ANGELA, slowly.*

ANG. Will no one take my hand? Two lately  
dead

Rushed past me in the air. O! are there  
not

Many within this room all standing still?

What are they all expecting?

GIO. Lead her aside:

I hear the slow pace of advancing feet.

*Enter SERVANTS bearing in PAOLO and FRANCESCA  
dead upon a litter.*

LUC. Ah! ah! ah!

GIO. Break not out in lamentation!

[*A pause . . . The SERVANTS set down  
the litter.*

LUC. [*Going to litter.*] I have borne one child,  
and she has died in youth!

GIO. [*Going to litter.*] Not easily have we three  
come to this—

We three who now are dead. Unwillingly  
They loved, unwillingly I slew them. Now  
I kiss them on the forehead quietly.

[*He bends over the bodies and kisses  
them on the forehead. He is shaken.*]

Luc. What ails you now ?

GIO. She takes away my strength.  
I did not know the dead could have such hair.  
Hide them. They look like children fast asleep !

[*The bodies are reverently covered over.*]

CURTAIN.

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